

## **Educating Stanley-Annex**

By Rima Najjar Merriman

(Editor's note: Below is a two part, support document for Rima Najjar Merriman's article [Educating Stanley](#). A brief narrative recap is followed by a set of theme organized selected comments drawn from the more than 800 posts which comprised the 8 day-long exchange between Boycott, Sanction, Disinvest(BSD) movement advocates, calling for the boycott of the Red Sea Jazz Festival, and Stanley Jordan, who eventually refused to support the call.

This document offers a unique detailed chronicle of a sadly all too common tension between the positions held by activists and those held by self-professed "apolitical" public figures.

In this context, we are sharing this in the hope that it will provide a good educational read for anyone interested in further understanding the principles informing the BDS movement, as well as for those already committed to support this particular manifestation of the struggle for peace and justice in Palestine.)

### **Part 1**

#### **Raising the Veil: The Nature of the Exchange**

You may already know that all the energy invested in educating Stanley Jordan did not pay off in the end. After eight full days of discussion and suspense on Facebook, Jordan posted his decision to not support the boycott of the Red Sea Jazz Festival, provoking one of his interlocutors to say simply:

**Sylvia Posadas:** "So sorry you cannot fully support Palestinian people at this time. You have not been requested to give charity, but support for their ethical choice of tactic. In time, perhaps you will understand what 'solidarity' really means."

#### **Please Try to Touch my Soul, but not my Pocket...**

Why was all this energy and sustained effort not conducive to making Stanley Jordan heed the boycott call? Well, as you will see below, it wasn't for the lack of intelligent engagement and wealth of information. There are several

theories going round, but the one I believe to be true is that, although he did come to see the justice of the Palestinian cause and even to sympathize with it, Stanley Jordan simply did not wish to give up his gig for financial reasons (what he described as "the reality of my situation").

**Stanley Jordan:** "Some of you are Israelis who support the boycott, and I really admire your courage, by the way! But why should we outsiders bare [sic] the economic brunt of the boycotts? You want me to quit my job, so then shouldn't you be quitting yours too? After all, any economic activity aids Israel and can be seen as de facto normalization. There's no attack here-- I'm just asking."

In answer to that, people, of course, pointed out that being asked to cancel a gig is not the same as quitting a job. A couple shared their experiences of "quitting jobs" from both sides of the divide:

**Samira Barghouthi:** "I quit my job as a university professor in Palestine and now is unemployed just to be able and have medical support for my daughters and (2) because getting to my work became so unbearable with Israelis checkpoints and pointing guns at civilians (self included) for no logical reason."

**Tali Shapiro:** "I'm a freelancer, I don't quit jobs, but I do skip gigs once in a while (and yes, sometimes it has to do with my disapproval of my potential employer's ethics or lack thereof). more often than not, I can't afford to skip a gig. Is this your situation?"

**Andy Griggs** asked a pointed question: "As Emma pointed out, no one here is suggesting you quit your job, nor do any of us have the ability to keep you from accepting or being offered future gigs. Has someone intimated to you that supporting the boycott would destroy your career? If so, they would be the bullies and that should be called out. The blacklisting of activists and musicians would be unacceptable, and I would imagine, you would have quite a bit of support if that were the case."

And **Emma Rosenthal** offered him compensation: "Be the change! We can connect you with venues and people not associated with Israeli propaganda and the Israeli military. We can help you get gigs in the West Bank, in Palestinian communities, in places Palestinians can attend. Your music can be very healing, as a statement of solidarity, artist to artist, person to person. No one is saying not to perform in Israel/Palestine, but not to contribute to the illusion that perpetuates a terrible regime. You have been put in a terrible position, by people who did not fully disclose to you the nature of the gig, that there was a political boycott and who knew full well that you would be advised and lobbied by activists not to attend. They knew all that, and signed you up, without disclosing any of it."

## **Hey, I'm Just a Musician...**

One of the many things on which Stanley Jordan was called up is the claim that he had no prior political involvement as a musician:

**Stanley Jordan:** "Samira, you ask why I wanted this discussion. Fair question and I'll address it now. The reason is because, for the first time in my life, I've been asked to cancel a gig for political reasons. I'm not a politician--I'm a musician. I do gigs for a living--that's what I do. I take my life's work very seriously and I'm being asked to cancel it based on something that I know very little about, and a subject--can we all agree here?"

It became apparent, however, that Stanley Jordan had, in fact, made very clear, public, and political statements on the subject of playing Sun City with fellow artists in 1987. (See artists United Against Apartheid - Sun City <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=aopKk56jM-I>).

However, Stanley Jordan waived off the contradiction between the principled stand he took then (and his position in support of various other human rights causes) on the one hand, and his reluctance to take a stand on the boycott call on the other as follows:

**Stanley Jordan:** "...What I have not done in any of those situations was compromise my principles by canceling a gig."

**Elise Hendrick:** "Stanley: I'm not sure I understand what you mean by this. If you still adhere to the principles that led you to speak out against playing Sun City, then it would be compromising your principles NOT to cancel this gig."

## **Unplugged or Simply Disconnected?**

In making his decision not to boycott, Jordan steadfastly refused to accept that, as Gail Nelson put it, "The Palestinian boycott call targets [Israeli] cultural institutions, projects and events that continue to serve the purposes of the Israeli colonial and apartheid regime" within the Brand Israel campaign, whose stated purpose is to utilize international artists to "normalize" and whitewash Israel as a culturally vibrant state. Rather than make this connection, he was concerned about Israel's "right to exist" and fearful that Israeli citizens would be harmed by the boycott (by missing the chance to be inspired by his music).

At one point he even said, "BDS is focused on Israelis, and as such, it does not directly benefit Palestinians." To Jordan the BDS campaign is to be understood as "a side" in a conflict equation of equality, rather than a resistance tactic chosen by an oppressed people against their oppressor. His worry that "the Jews" should not be isolated "any more than they already are"

in the face of the six-year blockade of Gaza and the apartheid wall surrounding whole towns in the West Bank was truly shocking, not least because he was, on this forum, addressing more Jews who were disagreeing with him than gentiles.

**Stanley Jordan:** "I certainly would not want my concert to be used by anyone to support a propaganda campaign. But it seems to me that the BDS boycott could be spun just as easily. They could say, for example that it's an attempt to isolate Jews even more than they already are. I won't give any more examples, because I don't want to give anyone any ideas, but the point is, we cannot control the major media. Telling me that I should not play the concert because it can be spun in the media is like saying there should be no BDS boycott because it, too can be spun. I'm not saying there's no media spin, I'm just saying that that, by itself, is not a reason to cancel my concert."

Jordan Stanley's inability to grasp even rudimentary facts about the campaign, or what the concept of "solidarity" (brilliantly explained by Adrian Boutoureira Sansberro below) really means, turned his statement that "You're also educating me so that I can hopefully someday speak intelligently on this matter" into a farcical proposition.

**Zoë Lawlor:** "Stanley, with all due respect, you have had a lot of time to read up on this and have had great input on this thread but to say that "BDS does not directly benefit Palestinians", frankly is shocking. It is a call from Palestinian civil society, it is what the Palestinians see as their best chance to resist occupation and apartheid. Do you think that they can touch souls within a state apartheid structure from behind walls and under siege? I can tell you something, the Palestinian people have touched the hearts and souls of millions of people around the world who identify with them in their struggle against oppression and who are inspired by their incredible sumoud - their steadfastness."

In the end, I am sorry to say, the whole discussion demonstrated that the following Tolstoy quotation is painfully apt:

"The most difficult subjects can be explained to the most slow-witted man if he has not formed any idea of them already; but the simplest thing cannot be made clear to the most intelligent man if he is firmly persuaded that he knows already, without a shadow of doubt, what is laid before him."

### **Braking it Down Beat by Beat**

In its most basic form, the discussion appeared to be between:

Those advocating for the power of "love and light" to prevail (this side included Stanley Jordan himself):

**Satkirin Khalsa:** "Be the change..." Love, Peace, and Kindness..."

**Annemarie Parrish:** "Peace happens! Healing happens, and music is a great tool for peace!"

Those advocating for the power of a principled stand to prevail:

**Emma Rosenthal:** "Going is an act of complicity, of normalization."

**Charlotte Kates:** "Palestinians are quite clear on the issue, and are the best people to decide how they can be supported."

## **Part II**

(Selected key arguments and information provided on the thread focused on stumbling blocks in Stanley Jordan's education.)

### **WHAT IS BOYCOTT, DISINVEST, SANCTION (BDS) REALLY ASKING?**

**Stanley Jordan:**

"Emma, thanks for the info. Of the [BDS] demands you have listed, #2 I can support right off the bat. #3 looks reasonable, but it references a UN resolution, which goes outside of my knowledge, so I'd need to understand better what the resolution actually says, and what it means in context. #1 goes extremely far outside of my knowledge, as I'm not qualified to evaluate issues of border disputes and where the borders were as of any given year. I'm fine with going back to the 1967 borders, as I mentioned earlier. But to go back before then? I have no idea what that means or where that is, let alone what would be involved in implementing it. I appreciate the efforts of everyone who has been informing me here, and I'm willing to learn more. But I have to be honest--this one looks like it will take considerable time for me to understand. current level of understanding. However, i do know this--if you roll it back far enough, Israel no longer exists, and I don't view that as an acceptable outcome.

**Sylvia Posadas:**

"Stanley Jordan: "If the message of the boycott is to avoid performing in Israel until Palestinians are treated fairly and humanely--that's one thing" Essentially, yes, Stanley, that is all that is being requested of you."

**Emma Rosenthal:**

"Precisely.

demand 1-- That Palestinians have full autonomy in what are the "Occupied Territories" and that the apartheid wall, which is in that territory, come down.

demand 2: That Palestinian Israelis inside what is Israel (minus the Occupied Territories) have full equal rights with Jewish Israelis, and

demand 3: That Palestinians who have been displaced and expelled be allowed right of return-- a right given to all Jews all over the world, are granted by Israel.

Some would argue that this would pose an existential threat to the state of Israel, and I would ask them, how is it that full equal civil and human rights are an existential threat? What kind of a state is it, that is existentially threatened by equal rights?"

Links:

BDS makes 3 basic demands

<http://www.bdsmovement.net/call>

### **DOES BDS DISAVOW VIOLENCE?**

**Stanley Jordan:**

"Does the BDS movement clearly and categorically disavow violence? I ask because comparisons have been made here to other resistance movements lead by Mahatma Gandhi, Rosa Parks and Martin Luther King, Jr.--and these movements were expressly nonviolent, which gave them moral authority. Thanks in advance for replies."

**J Kēhaulani Kauanui:**

"Stanley Jordan asks: "Does the BDS movement clearly and categorically disavow violence?"

I'm surprised and somewhat disconcerted by this query because it suggests that the informative posts delineated here, which pro-BDS folk pouring their hearts and energies into, have not necessarily been read either carefully or in their entirety.

BDS (Boycott, Divest, and Sanction) is a non-violent means of pressuring Israel to comply with international law.

The entirety of Palestinian civil society has called for BDS. That means THEY have decided that that's what they need from the rest of the world: that we heed \*their\* call to boycott, divest, and sanction Israel.

The Palestinian Campaign for the Academic and Cultural Boycott (PACBI) is the organizing center for the cultural boycott we are now asking you to honor.

I serve on the advisory board of the US Campaign for the Academic and Cultural Boycott (USACBI), which interfaces with PACBI. Someone from PACBI already posted above to ask you to respect the boycott AND added a resource link that has all the information anyone in your position should need to heed the call of conscience.

Here's the background on PACBI taken from its website, which gets at the issue of non-violence. I want to call your attention to the 4th sentence: "The BDS movement adopts a nonviolent, morally consistent strategy to hold Israel accountable to the same human rights standards as other nations."

"In 2004, inspired by the triumphant cultural boycott of apartheid South Africa, and supported by key Palestinian unions and cultural groups, PACBI issued a call for the academic and cultural boycott of institutions involved in Israel's occupation and apartheid. The 2004 Palestinian call appealed to international artists to refuse to perform in Israel or participate in events that serve to equate the occupier and the occupied and thus contribute to the continuation of injustice. Following this, in 2005, an overwhelming majority in Palestinian civil society called for an all-encompassing BDS campaign based on the principles of human rights, justice, freedom and equality. The BDS movement adopts a nonviolent, morally consistent strategy to hold Israel accountable to the same human rights standards as other nations. It is asking artists to heed the boycott call until "Israel withdraws from all the lands occupied in 1967, including East Jerusalem; removes all its colonies in those lands; agrees to United Nations resolutions relevant to the restitution of Palestinian refugees rights; and dismantles its system of apartheid."

Now, I trust that you are not - cannot possibly (in good faith) be - asking if the entirety of Palestinian civil society has committed itself to non-violence."

**Emma Rosenthal:**

"Does the Israeli government disavow violence? It seems an odd question, in light of the Israeli government's devotion to violence. I would also remind

you that Nelson Mandela spent 27 years in prison specifically because he refused to denounce violence, because the ANC repeatedly insisted that they had a right to defend themselves against a brutal regime. BDS is a specifically non-violent movement, but I would ask those who raise this issue, if violence is wrong, and if Israel is righteous, why it doesn't demonstrate non-violence, and use non-violent methods, at the very least, when dealing with nonviolent activists, demonstrations, civilian populations. Until those who perpetrate violence (we're back to the abuser/abused paradigm, where a different moral standard is applied to the victim than to the perpetrator) denounce violence, we have no right to demand non-violence of the victim.

BUT for those who do demand that those under brutal military occupation and oppression, subjected to violent arrest, detention without charges, exjudicial execution, attacks against civilian populations, destruction and seizure of homes and property, a wall that cuts people off from food, water, work, farmlands, practice nonviolence, it seems like a rather outrageous, opportune and dishonest demand, and one who is in support of social justice would be wise to demand of either neither or both sides."

**Andy Griggs:**

"Stanley, BDS comes from all sectors of civil society. I would imagine that some do and some do not denounce violence. The Israeli military, though, and Israeli civil society has not denounced violence, and as has been pointed out, are the ones in power, are the abusers.

To demand that all sectors of Palestinian society denounce violence is to hold Palestinian liberation struggles to a standard we NEVER held any other group with whom we were in solidarity. We may have insisted our own actions be non-violent, which BDS affords us-- a non-violent means of supporting Palestinian liberation, but we never demanded that all sectors of an oppressed society denounce violence-- not in Vietnam, not in Southern Africa, not in Central America. In fact, we couldn't even demand that of or provide it from our own movements. Would it be legitimate to oppose the civil rights movement or the anti-war movement and its calls for justice, because some sectors used violence to assert their positions?"

**Sam Playle:**

"Regarding nonviolence, I'd echo what people have already said, the BDS movement itself is completely nonviolent. However, the movement doesn't explicitly condemn the armed resistance. I think this is unrealistic because in practical terms it would be very divisive, but it would be like expecting Palestinians to accept the indignity of disavowing their right to defend themselves (even if that right is effectively only symbolic at this stage).



Perhaps it seems admirable the way Gandhi's followers went peacefully and got their skulls broken, but it wouldn't be right to demand from our position of comfort and privilege that an oppressed people hold themselves to much stricter standards than most of us would be prepared to. I would fully support the Palestinians if they decided to follow a completely nonviolent strategy, but that has to be a Palestinian decision, not a decision imposed from outside as a precondition for supporting them getting basic rights that we all take for granted.

Besides all that, if we're going to criticize the Palestinians for using violence, then it's essential we give concrete support to nonviolent Palestinian strategies, of which BDS is a shining example. If the Palestinians try to use this nonviolent strategy but see that the world ignores it, and holds them to hypocritically high standards, then we would all have to share some of the responsibility if large sections of the Palestinian population gives up its hopes in nonviolence.

**Matt Graber:**

"Stanley Jordan, on the question of non-violence:

BDS is a non-violent tactic endorsed by Palestinian civil society to advance justice and equality. Those who have endorsed BDS come from an incredibly broad swath within Palestinian civil society, Palestinian refugees, and those in solidarity with them. To support BDS is to explicitly support non-violence as a means of ending the 65-year ethnic cleansing of Palestine. To ask if those who support BDS disavow violence is to engage in a conversation about all tactics, which we are not speaking about here. For me personally, as an American citizen in solidarity with Palestinians, it is not my place to advocate one tactic over another.

To make an analogy: we are asking you to not get on the bus in Montgomery, Alabama. Was it a matter of concern as to the stance regarding armed resistance for those who endorsed the Montgomery bus boycott, BDS in South Africa, the Salt Satyagraha in India, or the California grape boycott?"

## **BDS & THE RIGHT OF ISRAEL TO EXIST**

**Stanley Jordan:**

"Gabriel, you said BDS is organized by over 100 associations. Are any of those organizations anti-Israel, and can you show me a reference or link in which the

BDS movement as a whole clearly and unequivocally recognizes the right of Israel to exist?"

**Elise Hendrick:**

"Israel was given a right to exist by the British. The UN recognized that back in 1948."

I was wondering when the pro-apartheid contingent would make their presence known. There is not much worth commenting on in the litany of historical inaccuracies recited by Stephen Mendez above in defence of the apartheid regime, except for one, key, aspect: The indigenous Palestinian population do not exist at all in his retelling.

"Israel was given a right to exist by the British" - leaving aside that that is a complete misstatement of the Balfour Declaration and the Mandate, note who apparently has NO right to a say on what was to be done with Palestine - the people whose country it is. They were sold down the river in a deal made without even inviting them to the table to watch, and so it has continued to this day.

Stanley, you brought up the analogy of therapy, and I'd like to walk down that path a bit, since you brought it up. Usually, a person who is in therapy is there because they are looking for your help - they have a problem and they want your expertise and talent to help them work through it.

That is not the case here. The polls show very clearly that the Israeli Jewish population - the vast majority - do not feel the least bit bad about the racism inherent in their society. They just want proof that others feel the same way, much like the guy who tells the nasty rape "jokes" that even he doesn't think are all that funny. Any sign of approval, any positive reinforcement, is taken as a sign that what they are doing, what their society is all about, is just fine.

So you have in Israel an utterly unwilling therapy client, if we are thinking of this in terms of individual therapy.

However, I don't think individual therapy is the best analogy. What we are dealing with is more in the nature of relationship therapy. The relationship between Israel and the indigenous Palestinian population is the classic abusive relationship on a mass scale. In an abusive relationship, the victim of the abuse is systematically deprived of support structures and even of the ability

to articulate what he or she (well, usually she) is going through.

The abuser, on the other hand, doesn't generally want to change, and why should he? He's getting what he wants. The abuse is working for him. Any attempt to make him change his ways will be a non-starter since the abuse gets the desired results.

So the real question, in this metaphorical therapeutic relationship, is how we can go about helping the abused party. How we can help them reclaim their voice and their power in the situation and have a life of dignity, free of constant fear and crushing violence."

**Zoë Lawlor:**

"The organizations calling for BDS are not "anti-Israel", they are anti-apartheid, anti-occupation, anti ethnic cleansing, anti home demolition, anti war crimes, anti roads for one group of people only, anti the imprisoning of 1.6 million people in a tiny area, anti the regular bombing, killing, maiming and terrorizing of those people. They are anti injustice."

**Emma Rosenthal:**

"Let's talk about the elephant in the living room: the vast history of Jewish suffering, which happened for the most part, in Europe, not in Historic Palestine. My rights as a Jew are not upheld by the oppression of Palestinians. My rights as a Jew are secured in a universal struggle for human rights for everyone. Palestinians are not my enemy. They do not threaten my existence. Racism has threatened my existence, as it now threatens Palestinian existence."

**Emma Rosenthal:**

A state gets its right to exist from the consent of the governed. Until all people under control of the state have that right-- to move freely, to vote, to go to school, how can we even discuss the state's legitimacy?

And what do you mean by "right to exist"? As a specifically Jewish state, with specific rights for Jews that others don't have? How is that legitimate? Would the ANC ever have accepted South Africa's right to exist as a White state, conferring special privileges to Whites only? [BDS making only three requests]

**Emma Rosenthal:**

"Please show me a single Israeli governmental document that shows a

Palestinian right to exist-- as a people or as a state? OSLO, and many subsequent documents attempted to reconcile a 2 state solution, which in my opinion is still an apartheid solution. There was no mention in OSLO of a recognized Palestinian state.

**Zoë Lawlor:**

"NO state has the right to exist as an apartheid state."

**Tom Pessah:**

"people have a right to exist, communities do, regimes don't. The Islamic Republic of Iran has no right to systematically discriminate against minorities by privileging Muslims. Its laws have no "right to exist". Iranians as people obviously do. So, similarly, any discriminatory legal framework exercised by the Israeli government has no right to exist, but Israelis and Palestinians do, of course."

**Karen MacRae:**

"Besides, the Palestinians and Hamas have already recognized Israel's right to exist on the green line which is what BDS is essentially basing their calls on. Read the first guideline."

**Haithem El-Zabri:**

"can you show me a reference or link in which the BDS movement as a whole clearly and unequivocally recognizes the right of Israel to exist?" ---> umm, see, this is exactly THE problem. what does "the right of Israel to exist" mean? whether you recognize that or not, it means to exist as a "Jewish state," i.e. whereby if you are a Jew of any nationality in the world, you can just move to Israel and become a citizen with all kinds of rights and privileges that are denied to the NATIVES, while the natives continue to be discriminated against and ethnically cleansed (something that is happening every day under our noses). why should such a racist oppressive state have "a right to exist"?? does that fit with your principles and ethics? why not a state for all its citizens with EQUAL RIGHTS FOR ALL? until Israel stops being a racist state, I think it is an absolute no-brainer to boycott it. I'm sure you know what the right thing to do is. i hope your conscience will ensure that you do it. peace...

**Karen MacRae:**

"Israel's demand to exist is very disingenuous. Israel wants to be recognized as a Jewish state. When it makes this demand, it is effectively demanding that Palestinians must acknowledge Israel's right to exist as a Jewish state on the lands of former Mandate Palestine. Acknowledging this would mean Palestinians are acknowledging that Israel has more of a right to live on

ancestral Palestinian lands than they do. it's like asking African Americans to not only recognize that slavery existed, but also must recognize slavery had a right to exist. This is just beyond outrageous for any rational principled person to even comprehend. It's so so racist.

**Elise Hendrick:**

Stanley: No state in the world has a "right to exist". The only state that has ever claimed one is Israel, and the absurdity of the concept becomes manifest the minute one tries to apply it universally (as any right must be applied). If states have a right to exist, then hasn't a serious crime been committed against East Germany, for example, or the Soviet Union? What about the Holy Roman Empire? That was a state, and, if states have a "right to exist", then we have an obligation to rebuild the Holy Roman Empire in order to ensure its continued existence.

International law - for good reason - does not give states a "right to exist", either in their present form or in any form at all. This notion of a "right to exist" came into the discourse shortly after it became impossible to deny that all Palestinian factions had recognised the one right Israel, as a state, actually can claim under international law: the right to exist peacefully within recognised borders (though the latter bit is a bit of a sticking point for Israel, since they refuse to state what borders they claim, and the state has expanded well beyond the only borders it is legally permitted to claim). The notion of a "right to exist" was just yet another ploy to avoid any kind of negotiation with the indigenous population.

Often, Zionists gloss the term "right to exist" as "legitimacy", and that's where the real problems come in. Why should anyone recognise the legitimacy of any state, let alone a state that was built on the ethnic cleansing of over 700,000 people, and is explicitly racist? What is legitimate about a state that has first- and second-class citizenship based on ancestry (or anything else, come to that)? And why should any self-respecting Palestinian accept the legitimacy of a regime that seeks to condemn him or her to permanent, irrevocable inferior status?

If states have a "right to exist"; then the rights of the apartheid regime in South Africa must also be restored.

**Gabriel Ash:**

"Stanley Jordan: It is not my appropriate role to represent the way any Palestinian organization would answer a loaded question like you just asked. The BDS call and the list of signatories is here. And you can ask them these

questions yourself. <http://www.bdsmovement.net/call>. I assume among the signatories you will find those who are closer to you in ideas and those who are further from you. The same will be true of me and anybody else. Allow me however to point what is "loaded" in the questions.

The call for boycott is a self-contained demand for for fundamental human and civil rights. It is a common denominator. Obviously, each person who supports this call is not obliged to fully agree with any other. I am a socialist. I believe only a socialist transformation can provide a future for all in the region. I also support the BDS call. The BDS call does not call for socialism. Some people who support the BDS call don't agree with me. I believe they are wrong. They believe I am wrong. Do we have to agree on everything in order to agree that all people deserve their human rights as defined by international law? We're asking you to act in solidarity with the Palestinian people as a whole in their struggle for equality and justice, not to join any specific organizations with a particular political line beyond that.

The call for boycott is based on a series of demands for fundamental human and civil rights as recognizes by international law. Does the validity of fundamental rights depend on the character of the petitioner? Let's assume that you will find an association supporting BDS that is made of really wretched people, hardened criminals, pedophiles and really unpleasant people that you would never want to have in your house. Indeed, let's assume that I'm like that. What then? have they forfeited their human rights? Is it ok to break into their house at 4AM, traumatize their children, and jail them without a trial because they aren't nice or someone who supports them isn't nice? Do you think people whose opinions or character you disagree with in your own society should be stripped of their rights and treated the way Israel treats Palestinians? The central issue here is (severe) racial discrimination. The very question you ask implies that racial discrimination is justified under certain conditions (if the victims fail to meet certain conditions.) Let me return the question to you. Under what conditions do you think it is legitimate to discriminate, murder, imprison, expropriate property, etc., on the basis of race, nationality, national origins, ethnicity etc.?

What is "Israel's right to exist"? What right has any state to exist? This term is a propaganda term. The only right states have in international law is the right to secure borders. This right can only be recognized by other states. That is the principle of non-aggression which prohibit states from breaching the territorial integrity and sovereignty of other states. The BDS call is issued by civil society groups representing individuals. Non of the signatories has an army or commands a state and threatens the integrity of Israel's borders or sovereignty, (or could, since Israel has to this day refused to declare what it considers to be its borders). I understand you are a US citizen. Have you been asked to "recognize the right of the US to exist" as a pre-condition for

enjoying your civil rights? If you were to declare tomorrow that you think the US should dissolve itself, would that justify stripping you of your civil rights? torturing your children? confiscating your property?

Some who use this language are quite clear that what they really mean "Israel has a right to exist as a Jewish state," namely, that Israel has the right to maintain a particular constitutional order that is based on discrimination to the extent necessary to preserve a particular ethnic domination. I personally am opposed to that and hold that not only Israel does not have that right, but it has the obligation to lose that constitutional order. That is not necessarily the opinion of every Palestinian but it is certainly not unheard of. But let's put opinions aside. What kind of right is that? Which other country demands recognition of its right to have a particular regime? Am I obliged to recognize the right of Saudi Arabia to be a monarchy? Are you? Are you infringing anybody's right if you declare your support for democracy in Bahrain? Do you think those challenging Iran's Islamic constitution are guilty of rejecting Iran's "right to exist?" Do you think the people in Tahrir Square challenged Egypt's "right to exist"? Was the call to abolish slavery a challenge to the US "right to exist" (wasn't that exactly what the slaveholders argued when they seceded?)

Having said all that, and I while I insist that that nobody is obliged to do anything to deserve fundamental rights, I would like to call your attention that the BDS call appears in Hebrew on the BDS official page, and specifically says "We also invite conscientious Israelis to support this Call, for the sake of justice and genuine peace." I also call your attention that the BDS call is limited to demanding that Israel complies with all its international law obligations. Do you think a state can comply with its legal obligations without existing? Or that international law, which is the basis of all rights states have, is inherently incompatible with Israel's existence?

Now, the last part of the question is about being "anti-Israel." Since anti means "against", everyone who acts against the state of Israel can be called "anti-Israel." And indeed we are constantly defined that way. Koby Snitz, Israeli mathematician and BDS supporter, was interrogated by the Israeli security services last week. The security services define BDS as a state security issue, i.e., supporting it endangers the state. (MLK was seen a security state by Edgar Hoover, so that's hardly original.) Is that what you mean by the term "anti-Israel"? Because that is how the term is usually used. I think BDS is anti-oppression, anti-injustice, and anti-racism, whether it's anti-Israel is a matter of definitions, including a matter of how you define Israel.

Thank you for your engagement and please continue to ask questions. It's a good way."

**Elise Hendrick:**

"Stanley Jordan: "If the message of the boycott is to avoid performing in Israel until Palestinians are treated fairly and humanely--that's one thing"

That is precisely what the BDS appeal is all about. It is not a permanent boycott of Israel or all things Israeli (though Zionist propagandists do love to claim the contrary, knowing it's a lie). It is a boycott of the Israeli state and its core institutions until such time as all the Palestinians, whether they're '48 Palestinians with Israeli passports or '67 Palestinians living in the West Bank, Gaza, and occupied East Jerusalem, - not to mention the refugees who have been forced into the vast Palestinian diaspora - are genuinely and fully guaranteed their most basic human rights - freedom, self-determination, and legal, social, and economic equality.

"But I have to admit, I do have an issue with this idea that canceling my upcoming gig is the only way I can be supportive."

The question that arises, however (regardless of your intentions), is what you will, in effect be supportive of. The Israeli regime quite openly treats all forms of cultural exchange as propaganda, as a means of "proving" that Israel is an open, democratic, diverse society and moving the focus away from house demolitions, ethnic cleansing, cultural genocide, land theft, and a state so openly racist that it considers every birth in the indigenous population to be part of a "demographic threat".

I stress that the question is not your intentions, which seem to me to be good, but the effect of your actions, the way in which a decision by you not to cancel your performance in the apartheid regime will be used by the regime and its apologists, and please do not doubt that it WILL be used.

It will be used, as a way of crowding dead and mutilated Palestinians - who don't much attention to begin with because atrocities are such a bummer - out of the news cycle and the public's attention in order to facilitate further crimes. If you go, there is nothing you will be able to do in order to prevent your presence being exploited in this fashion - your words can be edited or cut from the footage, inconvenient quotes left out of the press releases, because you're not the one who gets to do the framing - the regime is, and they spend a lot of time and money finding ways to turn an event into its opposite and to twist people's words beyond recognition if it somehow helps them project the image they're trying to project.



The Palestinians, most of whom will not be allowed anywhere near your performance, have decided that the best way to further their interests is for artists like yourself to refuse to dignify the regime with their presence, in order to deny the Israeli government the opportunity to whitewash all that institutionalised ugliness with a fresh coat of faux pluralism. The BDS appeal has been around for years now, and not a single Palestinian organisation of any weight (indeed, to my knowledge, not a single Palestinian organisation full stop) has ever come out against the tactic. As such, it seems fair to say that the Palestinian consensus on one of the best ways that those of us who aren't there to demonstrate with them and bear direct witness to their violent oppression, is that we should simply deny the regime our patronage.

A number of artists have already done so. Some of whom, such as Elvis Costello, have made excellent statements explaining their reasons for cancelling gigs in the apartheid state that draw attention to the suffering inflicted on the Palestinian people and our responsibility to do what we can to put an end to it. Adding your voice to the growing list would be an extremely strong statement - stronger, indeed, as Emma Rosenthal noted above, than had you simply turned down the gig to begin with - in favour of freedom, equality, and justice for the Palestinians."

### **THERE IS ONLY ONE SIDE**

**Stanley Jordan:**

"And yes, I've been privately hearing opinions on both side of this issue, and I must admit, that is part of what is making my decision so difficult. I hope you can all understand and I hope you believe me that I really am sincerely trying to figure this out. If there is anyone who is reading this and wants me to keep my engagement, or even if you just agree that there are two sides to the issue, I wish you would join the discussion. It has been passionate, but respectful and I will do my best to keep it that way. Look, I never had any intentions of getting into this kind of but the truth is, there really are two sides and it really is very confusing."

**Gabriel Ash:**

"Hello Stanley, first, thanks for reaching out and trying to learn more about the question. I am an one of the many involved in organizing BDS campaigns. I am also a Jewish citizen of Israel, but I no longer live in Israel. I would like to make below a number of comments.

The conflict in Palestine does not have "two sides." It is a situation of severe and overwhelming oppression of the indigenous people of Palestine by a colonial state. In the same way that you wouldn't talk about "two sides" in relation to slavery, apartheid in South-Africa, or the genocide of native-Americans . Of course, in each of these cases, those who were engaged with apology for maintaining the oppression claimed otherwise, and the same is true in the case of Israel. So that's the fundamental political divide. To say that that "two sides" is a wrong perspective is not to deny that Israelis exists, are human, have lives, etc. It means one thing, that the burden of ending the oppression is on Israel. Therefore, the challenge "to make peace" is misleading. True peace can only mean, as Martin Luther King defined it, "the present of justice". The primary role of any person of conscience as I understand it is to put pressure on those who benefit from injustice to relent and open the possibility of justice and equality. That is the only road to peace.

BDS is a picket line, put by Palestinians who asked you, me, and everyone in the world who cares for justice to put that pressure by, among other things, boycotting Israel. I recommend the following detailed analysis about the role of culture in politics. <http://www.pacbi.org/etemplate.php?id=2080>

You ask, how you can act as an artist to use your music in the cause of peace. The first task, it seems to me, is to listen. But in listening, please do not forget that your ability to listen is slanted by the medium. Being on facebook, for example, is not a neutral fact. It takes money, access to technology and free time to be able to converse with you on facebook, and the same is true on every other media.

The voice of the oppressed is by definition the one that is less loud, less easy to hear, because part of oppression is of course the denial of access to those resources, and also because oppression is "normal" and therefore supporting it is comfortable. Please take that in consideration. If you listen passively, you will hear "both sides", but in fact, you will hear the voice of power, the voice of the neutral buzz that power generates as the background musak of reality. To really listen, you have to listen actively, filtering that power out.

By going to play in Israel, you will be crossing a picket line, thus taking a political stand, one of dismissing the appeal of the oppressed. You will be playing in venues that will be segregated. The indigenous people of the land will not be allowed to come to your shows even if they wanted or knew about it. You may bring Israelis any message you want, but the one that they will hear louder is the one that your very presence will convey: your support for the normalcy of the situation, your acceptance that they should have the "right" to enjoy your music, and every other thing good in life, while actively denying it to others. They will also hear the message that you told Palestinians off and that will be an encouragement for doing nothing. As we know from what happened

to others, the Israeli foreign minister will publicise your visit and point out that you too ignored the boycott call. You will become a recruit for maintaining the occupation whether you like it or not.

I urge you to go visit Palestine, to go play in Palestine, to bring Palestine in your music, but do not participate in official, "normal" business. You will not be bringing peace closer, you will be conveying the message that life goes on, normally, and it's ok to keep millions of people under the gun while one is listening to music.

PACBI-A comprehensive analysis of the arguments surrounding the call for a cultural boycott of Israel

[www.pacbi.org](http://www.pacbi.org)

### **WHO IS SPONSORING THE RED JAZZ FESTIVAL?**

**Stanley Jordan:**

"Matt, I have no connection to the Israeli state. And my assumption all along has been that the Red Sea Jazz Festival is a cultural and artistic organization that is not political or military. Someone earlier sent me a link to sponsors but it was in Hebrew and I could not read it.

**Roland Rance:**

"Stanley Jordan:

The sponsors on the list are Eilat Municipality, Ministry of Culture and Sport, Ministry of Tourism, Eilat Hotels Association, Isrotel, Recaniti Winery and Eilat Tourist Bureau. This is clearly an officially sponsored event. Elsewhere on the site, it states specifically, in English, "The Red Sea Jazz Festival established in 1987 as a four day international jazz festival, initiated by Eilat city hall aid by Ministry of Culture, Ministry of Tourism, Eilat Sea Port, Eilat Hotel Association and various business sponsors."

Red Sea Jazz Festival - About

<http://www.redseajazzeilat.com/en/about/>

### **ON SOLIDARITY**

**Adrian Boutureira Sansberro:**

"Dear Stanley, et al...I have read all the messages above. It has at times been painful to navigate. I feel there are too many unnecessary analogies and

tangents being introduced, which are not ultimately helping us address some of the pending core issues originally raised. Most importantly, what does being In Solidarity mean?

I have been a solidarity activist for the better part of 20 years and I have helped build national and international solidarity networks, including the Zapatista Solidarity Network and the Latin America Solidarity Network, here in the US.

There are a few fundamental tenets as to what constitutes being "in solidarity" in the movements I have been a part of. These tenets arise from years of accumulated shared experiences. Firstly, we are in solidarity with the oppressed, not the oppressor. Secondly, being in solidarity entails being able to take direction from those one claims to be in solidarity with. Learning how to take direction, as to what is it that those we are in solidarity with wish us to do, is a huge aspect of shifting the relationships of power between the oppressed and the oppressor. It is also a way to really come face to face with our own true commitment and power issues.

To do as we wish, is not being in solidarity. It is practicing supremacist charity. I say supremacist, because even when people claim to be in solidarity, they refuse to relinquish their own power and privilege as individuals. They refuse to surrender their own interests. They refuse to recognize that the collective must always be greater than the individual, or we are not in solidarity at all. We are then independent actors who can not accept taking direction for whatever reason.

In my experience White males have always the hardest time surrendering that power. After them, males of all sorts. We always think that we know best. That our ideas are just as valid as, if not even better informed than, the ideas of those who are suffering directly the consequences of their oppression. We want them to listen to "us" to consider our enlightened point of view.

Well, that is supremacist, that is patriarchy, that is not solidarity. We do not lead, we do not enlighten, we do not propose the third way...We take DIRECTION. If we can't do that, we must then at least be honest enough with ourselves that we are not in solidarity at all, but are merely sympathetic to a cause. I am not sympathetic with the Palestinian cause. I am in solidarity with the Palestinian cause, and will take direction from the Palestinian people as to how I can best show that what that means is real to me and to my social, cultural, economic and political ethic.

Love, Justice, and Solidarity,

Adrian Boutureira"

## **ON MICHAEL LERNER**

### **Stanley Jordan:**

"Although Michael Lerner is a rabbi, his book is very balanced. I like the idea of searching for a spiritual solution. So far we've relied only on military, political and economic solutions- That approach has not been sufficient, and much of it has even been counterproductive .... The main thesis of Michael Lerner's book is that a change in consciousness is crucial. He says that the solution will require mutual generosity and compassion. Of course many may say that that will take a long time to happen. I hope you're wrong, but you might be right. Either way, the point is, the solution will not be found until this change of consciousness occurs. One very positive thing I see in the BDS boycotts is that they shift the battleground from the military domain to the economic and cultural, which is certainly a more humane from of battle-but it's still battle nonetheless. What resonates with my own heart is to step outside of the very frame that insists that some form of conflict is the only option. Some of you may feel that conflict is necessary--at least for now. But even if necessary, I'm sure that it's not sufficient. That's why I find this book to be right on. And he does offer specifics such as a call for a Global Marshall Plan, to be first implement in the Middle East."

### **Emma Rosenthal:**

"It's important, Stanley, to look at the details of the proposal. Lerner advocates a two state solution, where Israel remains an essentially Jewish state, with protected rights for that Jewish majority. Whenever a state must make borders to assure one group maintain a majority, the demographic efforts and controls result in extremely racist policies.

Besides, there is no viable 2 state solution. The facts on the ground have assured a continuing 1 state solution-- but it's an repressive, apartheid state. the 2 state solution has never really been a sincere proposal, as limited as it is. At this point in time it's just a distraction to any real discussion. If a viable 2 state solution were even a remote possibility, Israel could have created that, unilaterally. Even in the midst of Oslo, Israel never stopped settlement expansion. It never intended to cede an inch of the best land.

[I]t's also important to point out that Lerner has no base of support among Palestinians, who see his proposal for what it is, not for what it appears to be. Lerner's proposal does not even begin to address the issue of refugee

right of returns. I have that "right" as a Diaspora Jew, but Palestinians who still have the keys to their homes and the deeds to their land, cannot return. Where is that justice?"

**Sylvia Posadas:**

"At one of his addresses, Lerner claimed that there has to be a change in social consciousness in the way there had to be a change in consciousness about the patriarchy before feminism could succeed. However, beyond an analysis of the patriarchy, it is sexism that holds back women, and beyond an understanding of racist hegemony, it is racism which prevents Palestinians attaining their just rights.

Infused with respect for human rights, the Palestinian-led boycott logically and directly aims at ending this racism.

[H]ere is Lerner: 'We at Tikkun have suggested that Israel take in twenty to thirty thousand refugees each year for the next thirty years, because at the expectable growth rate of populations that number would not undermine the demographic balance and yet would appear to be a rather significant act of atonement.'

What Lerner proposes, as I referred to above in my comparison of his stance with the White Australia policy, is a racist solution to ensure a continued racist Jewish demographic majority. He is opposed to the removal of racist privilege for Jews in Israel.

Thus, as I've previously said, he is guaranteeing the status quo, because without equal rights for all, and real human and political rights for disenfranchised Palestinians in the Occupied Territories over whom Israel governs and will continue to govern in a de facto sense with Netanyahu's plan, the status quo will indeed continue - more expansionism, more brutality, more oppression, and more apartheid."

Attention Peter Beinart - Urgent Call from Cognitive Dissonance  
<http://mondoweiss.net/2012/05/peter-beinarts-cognitive-dissonance-on-threats-to-israels-demographics.html>

**Gabriel Ash:**

"Stanley Jordan: Lerner is problematic for a lot of reasons mentioned by others, but I'll give him credit for being a kind of gateway drug. A lot of people started to think about Palestine with Lerner and then moved beyond him. But to talk about what is the right policy misses the point. We're not crafting policies. We talk precisely about how to relate to each other. It's true, no

government can "solve" this problem. It's the role of people to bring change by changing the way they act and relate to others. But what does that mean in practice? It seems to me where Lerner fails is precisely in drawing the conclusion. To stop acting from fear is to stop accepting the normalcy and violence and oppression, because it is fear, fear of loss, fear of consequences, fear of ridicule, fear of punishment and, fear of deprivation that make all of us accept the way things are. To stop acting from fear is precisely what people are doing when they demand and insist on that oppression has to stop."

**Rod Such:**

"I'm familiar with Rabbi Lerner's opposition to the Palestinians' call for BDS, and I find his argument unpersuasive and decidedly unspiritual. Lerner argues that this is a conflict between two traumatized people--Israeli Jews because of the Holocaust and Palestinian Arabs because of the Nakba, that is Israel's forced expulsion of nearly 1 million Palestinians--and therefore, boycott will only add to the trauma and will not convince Israeli Jews to stop oppressing Palestinians. His argument doesn't convince for two reasons. First, you could easily say that white Afrikaners were also a traumatized people because of what they endured during the Boer War when the British not only massacred them but also placed them in the world's first concentration camps. But no one made this argument during the boycott of South Africa because it would have been laughable. White South Africans were immeasurably privileged and powerful and directly oppressed black and colored South Africans, much like the oppression Israeli Jews now exercise over Palestinians, both within Israel."

### **IS THE BOYCOTT EFFECTIVE?**

**Stanley Jordan:**

"What is the goal of the boycott, and what evidence do you have that my cancelling my show would help that cause?"

**Gabriel Ash:**

On the question of effectiveness. Nobody can promise what will or will not be effective. It is the nature of political acts that there are necessarily uncertain with regards to their effects. The general arguments as to why the boycott is effective involves two parts. One, dialogue attempts have proven to be not only ineffective, but positively sapping, in that it allows governments and other actors to pretend they are engaged while not doing anything that challenges the reality of oppression. Two, for historical reasons Israelis are

deeply concerned, indeed obsessed, by their identity as part of the "West" (as slogans such "the only democracy in the Middle East" reveals). Therefore, Western artists have an enormous power to pierce into Israeli consciousness by being clear that Israel is beyond the pale in its behavior. Desmond Tutu made the point that it was precisely that kind of dynamics that made the boycott of South African sport teams effective and a powerful contribution to the end of apartheid.

"Many of you will remember how effective the sports boycott of the 1970s and 1980s was in conveying to sport-crazy South Africans that our society had placed itself beyond the pale by continuing to organise its life on the basis of racial discrimination. Your refusal to kow-tow to racism was the sanction that hurt the supporters of apartheid the most, and for those of us who suffered the effects of discrimination nothing could have shown us more vividly the principal value enshrined in the preamble to the Spirit of Cricket, which Lord Cowdrey and Ted Dexter later helped to introduce to the laws of the game, the value of which is all the more powerful for the simplicity of its statement, and that of course is fair play. For 20 years, as the sports boycott tightened and apartheid stopped generations of South African sportsmen and women, both white and black, realising their full potential, you and others like you drummed into us what the world saw as fair play and what it saw as unfair play. I have not the slightest doubt that what you did played a major role in persuading the supporters of apartheid to change their ways and, in the negotiations that followed F.W. de Klerk's courageous decision to release Nelson Mandela in 1990, to agree on a constitution based on the principle, also enshrined in the Spirit of Cricket, of respect for others."  
(<http://www.lords.org/laws-and-spirit/spirit/mcc-spirit-of-cricket-cowdrey-lecture/2008-cowdrey-lecture-full-text,990,AR.html> )

But I want to return to the crucial point about uncertainty. Devising political strategies is hard and the only chance it has to be of value is that it comes from a deep and long engagement driven by the people at the heart of the struggle. It is presumptuous to come out of a blue and decide "I think this is ineffective. I think that is effective." BDS is not a whim. It is a national strategy, organised by over 100 associations, based on years of engagement and experience. The right thing to say about effectiveness is "I don't know, but this is what THEY think would help them" and if one wants to help, this is where one begins.

**IF YOU BOYCOTT ISRAEL FOR HUMAN RIGHTS OFFENSES, DON'T YOU ALSO HAVE TO BOYCOTT ARAB COUNTRIES?**

**Stanley Jordan:**



I am perfectly willing right now to boycott the settlements and the settlers, These are clear-cut violations of the 1967 borders. But to expand the boycott to Israel as a whole raises the question: How far does this go? I've played extensively in Muslim countries such as UAE, Lebanon, Turkey, Egypt and Jordan. Many of these places have policies and even laws that specifically target Jewish people. So shouldn't I boycott them as well? Also, the USA has been accused of covertly aiding Israel in oppressing the Palestinians. Does this mean I have to boycott my own country too? If we musicians boycott every country that commits atrocities, there would be no music in the world! This would undoubtedly lead to even more conflict and less understanding. Some of you are Israelis who support the boycott, and I really admire your courage, by the way! But why should we outsiders bare the economic brunt of the boycotts? You want me to quit my job, so then shouldn't you be quitting yours too? After all, any economic activity aids Israel and can be seen as de facto normalization. There's no attack here-- I'm just asking. And thanks everyone for the respectful discussion!

**Gabriel Ash:**

"Stanley Jordan: Thank you again for your engagement. Let me try to answer your question.

1. The boycott here is not an abstract moral posture. We are not asking you to boycott Israel because Israel is bad. Lots of things are bad. There are horrible government all over the world committing terrible acts. Boycott is a strategy, developed in view of a. what's possible. b. what is likely to have impact. c. what's legitimate. Part of that is that it requested by the victims on the basis of a rational argument. This is what you can do to help put pressure on Israel to stop doing a,b,c. If the victims of the Egyptian government asked you to boycott Egypt on similar grounds (feasibility, legitimate demands, legitimate target, likelihood for impact), then absolutely, you should boycott Egypt. But you shouldn't boycott Egypt just because it has a government that does something wrong in the abstract. Then, you'd be right, you'd have to boycott everything. But this is not what is asked here.

2. The target of the boycott is based on responsibility and impact, not symbolism. Israel, the state, and behind the state, the society, not the settlements, is responsible for the oppression of Palestinians. The settlements are ONE aspect of the oppression. They are not the sovereign entity making the decision to oppress. It is Israel that builds settlements, and it is Israeli society that elects politicians who build settlements. The settlements do not build themselves.

3. While there is value in boycotting settlements, this is almost irrelevant to the cultural boycott, as artists are never asked to go to settlements. You

cannot help Palestinians that way. It would be a meaningless gesture.